

Undergraduate Community-Based Learning Abroad: Maximizing Impact

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In the 2011-2012 academic year, Johns Hopkins University (JHU) offered two new undergraduate programs abroad that emphasized service-learning and community engagement: a public health program centered on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa, and a program in Uganda that examined rural and urban child health and education challenges and interventions. Components of each model were adapted from successful established programs including, but not limited to Global Roots, School for International Training, Vermont Intercultural Semesters, and CIEE.

Childhood Health and Society in Uganda, Kampala and Rakai, Uganda

21 students: 14 American (JHU) and 7 Ugandan (Makerere)

3 Instructors: 2 American and 1 Ugandan

3.5 weeks long, Urban and rural child health and education

Program Element	Successes	Challenges	Program Priorities Going Forward
Student preparation ahead of time	Experiential initiatives to challenge preconceived ideas. Highlighted social, political and cultural context of Uganda for American students Prepared students for peer-to-peer model Skyped with Ugandan students.	Ugandan students' pre-program orientation was not as in-depth	Create standardized pre-program orientation for Ugandan and American students at Makerere and JHU, respectively.
Peer-to peer	Learned together, lived together. All students cited it as critical to their learning.	Learning felt more designed for the Americans, with Ugandans sometimes playing role as translator/guide	Include peer-to-peer. Also, bring Ugandan students to Baltimore/JHU for a reciprocal exchange examining child health and education in Baltimore.
Co-planning: JHU/Makerere	Shared vision Working together from the start	Misunderstandings re: long-term partnership objectives	Find a host-country champion with shared vision for mutual benefit.
Reflection	Student and instructor lead. Deepened personal growth. Living together for entire 3.5 weeks facilitated reflection as needed.	Each session was ambitious in tried to combine academic and experiential/personal reflections	Mix of structured reflections and opportunities for impromptu group processing.
Service projects	Sites enthusiastic about volunteers and participants enthusiastic about volunteering	Too brief, relationship felt transactional	Determine best approach to short-term service projects: avoid poverty tourism.
Rural homestay	Cited as most important component for Ugandan and American students. Fostered genuine cultural exchange. Families surveyed and positively reviewed experience.	While families reported positively in evaluations, what do the families receive from hosting?	Include homestay component, but ensure community benefit.

The literature on mutuality and reciprocity is large and growing. In reviewing our programs and considering lessons learned, additional review of the literature has proven invaluable. Influential writing includes, but is not limited to:

- Crabtree, R. (2011). "Review Essay: Progress and Promise for International Service-Learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. 17(2): 78-82. Pointed out that almost all evaluations focus on student outcomes rather than community impacts.
- Giles, DE, & J Eyler. (1994). "The Theoretical Roots of Service-Learning in John Dewey: Toward a Theory of Service-Learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. 1(1): 77-85. Pointed towards the importance of mutuality in

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service learning and the relationship between service learning and experiential education.

- Keith, NZ. (2005). "Community Service Learning in the Face of Globalization: Rethinking Theory and Practice." *Michigan Journal of Service Learning*, Spring 2005:5-24. Proposed ways that service learning programs could adapt to a globalized world.
- Landau, J, & DC Moore. (2001). "Towards Reconciliation in the Motherland: Race, Class, Nationality, Gender, and the Complexities of American Student Presence at the University of Ghana, Legon." *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. 7(2): 25-59. Present powerful argument about the difficulties of working across power differentials.
- Lutterman-Aguilar, A, & O Gingerich. (2002). "Experiential Pedagogy for Study Abroad." *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. 8(7): 41-82. Argued for the importance of reciprocity as a key principle in both study abroad and experiential education, and for a dialogic model of learning. Pointed to importance of homestay.
- Marullo, S., et al. (2009). "C. Wright Mills's Friendly Critique of Service Learning and an Innovative Response: Cross-Institutional Collaborations for Community-Based Research." *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 37, 2009 (January:61-75). Examined reasons that service learning programs often don't reach their potential due to power imbalances between universities and communities.
- Oldfield, S. (2008). "Who's Serving Whom?: Partners, Process, and Projects in Service-Learning Projects in South African Urban Geography." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. 32(2): 269-285. Questioned benefits for community partners.
- Reilly, D, & S. Sanders. (2009). "Becoming the Change We Want to See: Critical Study Abroad for a Tumultuous World." *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. 18 (Fall 2009): 241-267. Linked study abroad programs to class reproduction and both idealist and political internationalism; proposed a more activist approach.

Public Health in South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa

10 students: 10 American (JHU)

3 Instructors: 1 American, 1 Canadian, 1 South African

7 weeks long, South African public health through the lens of HIV/AIDS.

Program Element	Successes	Challenges	Program Priorities Going Forward
Student preparation ahead of time	Challenging preconceived ideas. Meeting fellow students and site supervisors before placements begin. Highlighting social, political, and cultural context of South Africa.	Gauging sufficient preparation in Baltimore pre-departure vs. more intensive orientation once arrived.	Intensive pre-departure orientation for students and ensure they are adequately prepared.
Internships 3 days/week with South African NGO.	Extended time in a 'real' work experience with the chance to develop relationships over time.	Challenging to make good matches between organizational needs and student abilities – student pool is a limiting factor.	Maintain ongoing relationships with community service sites to increase familiarity and deepen relationship on both sides.
Co-planning for internships with NGOs	Sites articulated a specific assignment/need, buy-in from several levels of the organization.	For new groups, at times difficult to know what would be a realistic assignment for the student capacity and/or program time.	Clear expectations and ongoing communication with service-project sites.
Co-Planning: JHU/University of Cape Town	Good buy-in, benefits to both campuses and room for further collaboration.	UCT students on winter holiday – more peer interaction has the potential to be good for both institutions.	Include peer-to-peer component with JHU and host-country students. Host-country champion.
Reflection	Weekly individual written and weekly group oral reflections. Good variety of voices/means of expression.	Weekly group conversations sometimes too sparse.	Mix of structured reflections and opportunities for impromptu group processing.
3 night homestay	Great to experience life in a township, not just work.	Brief.	Include homestay component, but ensure community benefit.

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